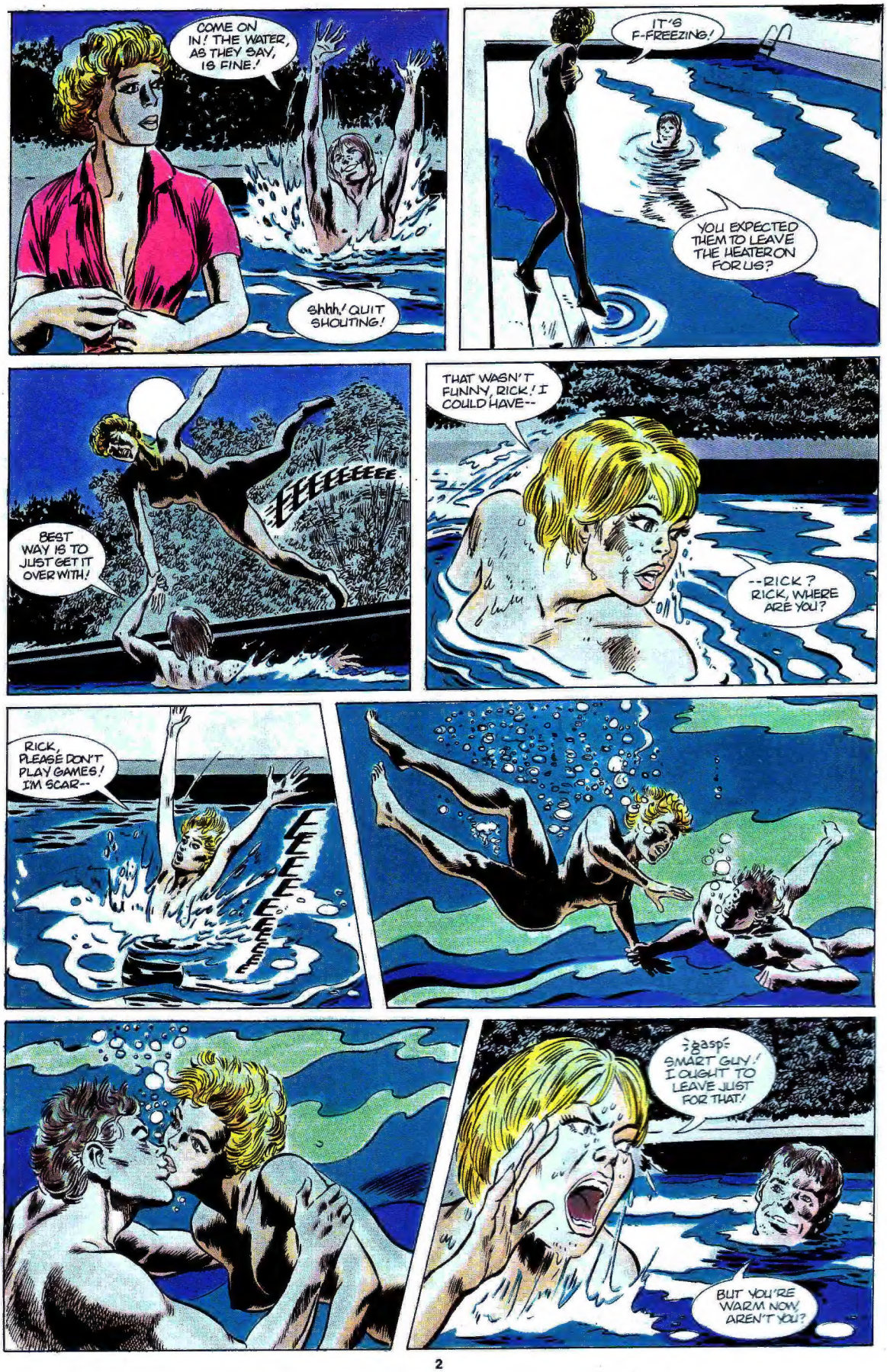
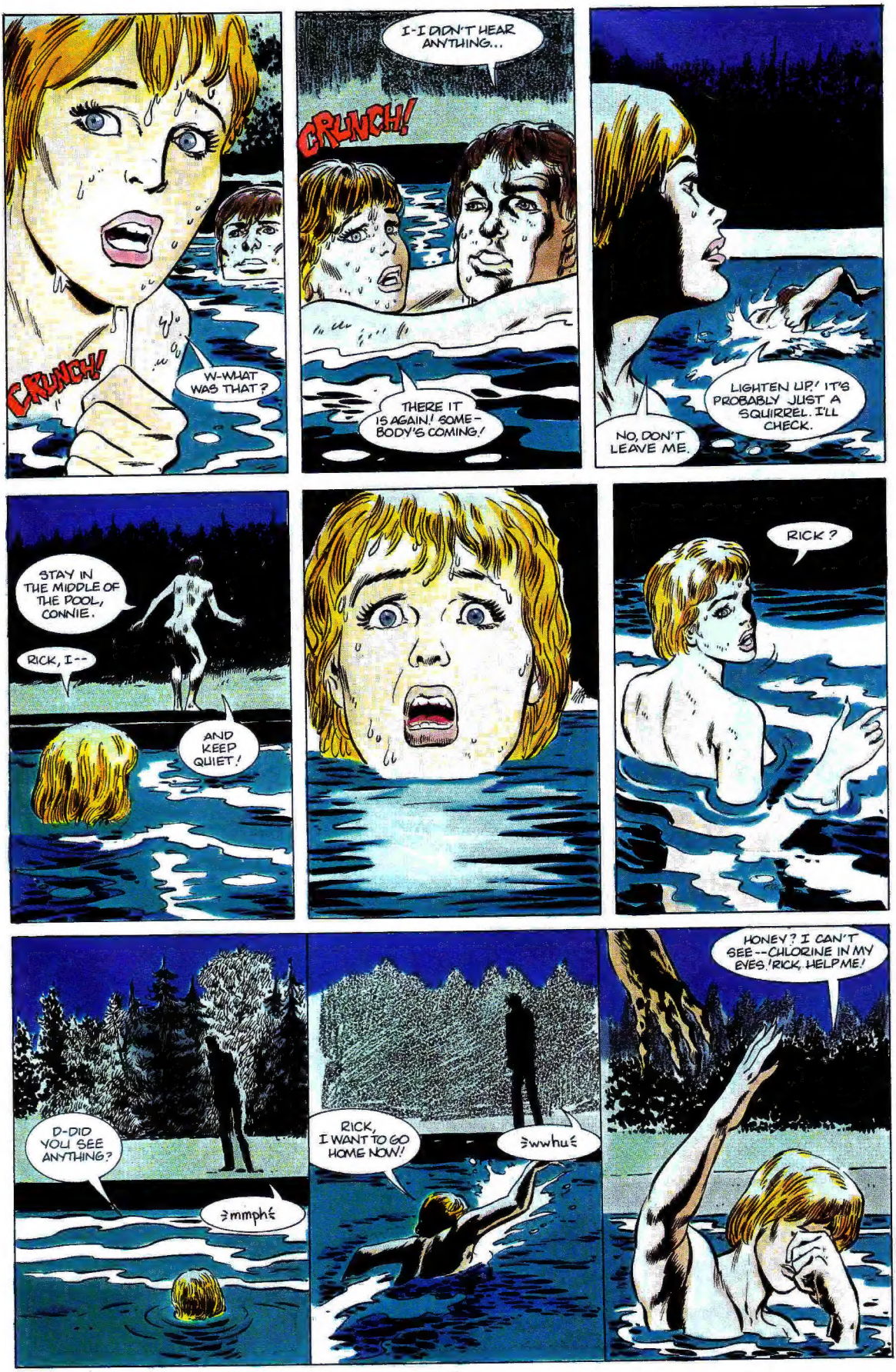
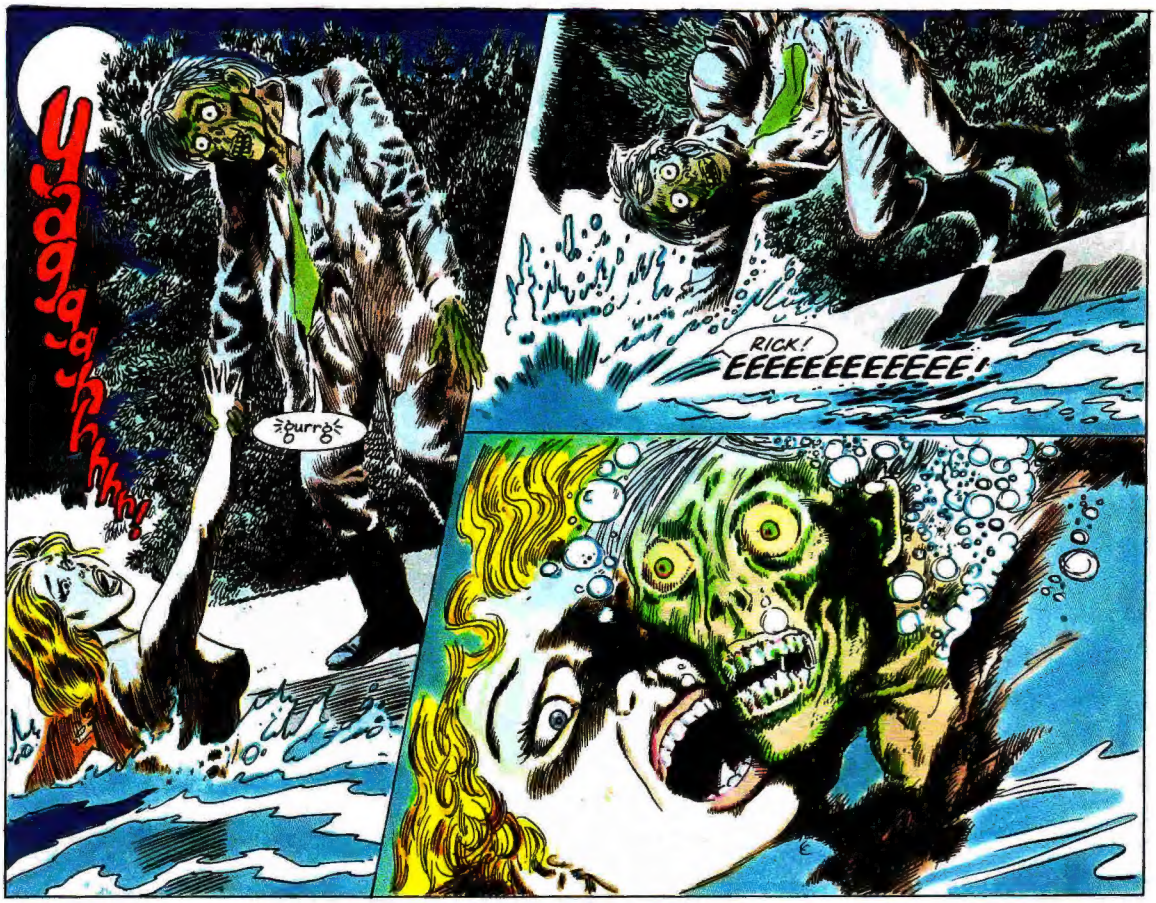
10 ECLIPSE COMICS
10th Anniversary
№ 2
$2.00/CANADA $2.95
Hand of Fate

VROOOOMM
OKAY, THIS IS CLOSE ENOUGH-- FROM HERE WE WALK!
RICK, THIS ISN'T RIGHT!
I KNOW! THAT'S WHY IT'S SO MUCH FUN!
WHAT IF WE GET CA--
WE WON'T GET CAUGHT. C'MON!
THEY'LL HEAR US.
CONNIE, I TOLD YOU, THEY'RE ALWAYS ASLEEP BY NOW...
...THERE SHE IS! NICE, HUH?
...NICE.
LAST ONE IN IS A RE-PUBLICAN!
RICK, WAIT!
YA-HOO!

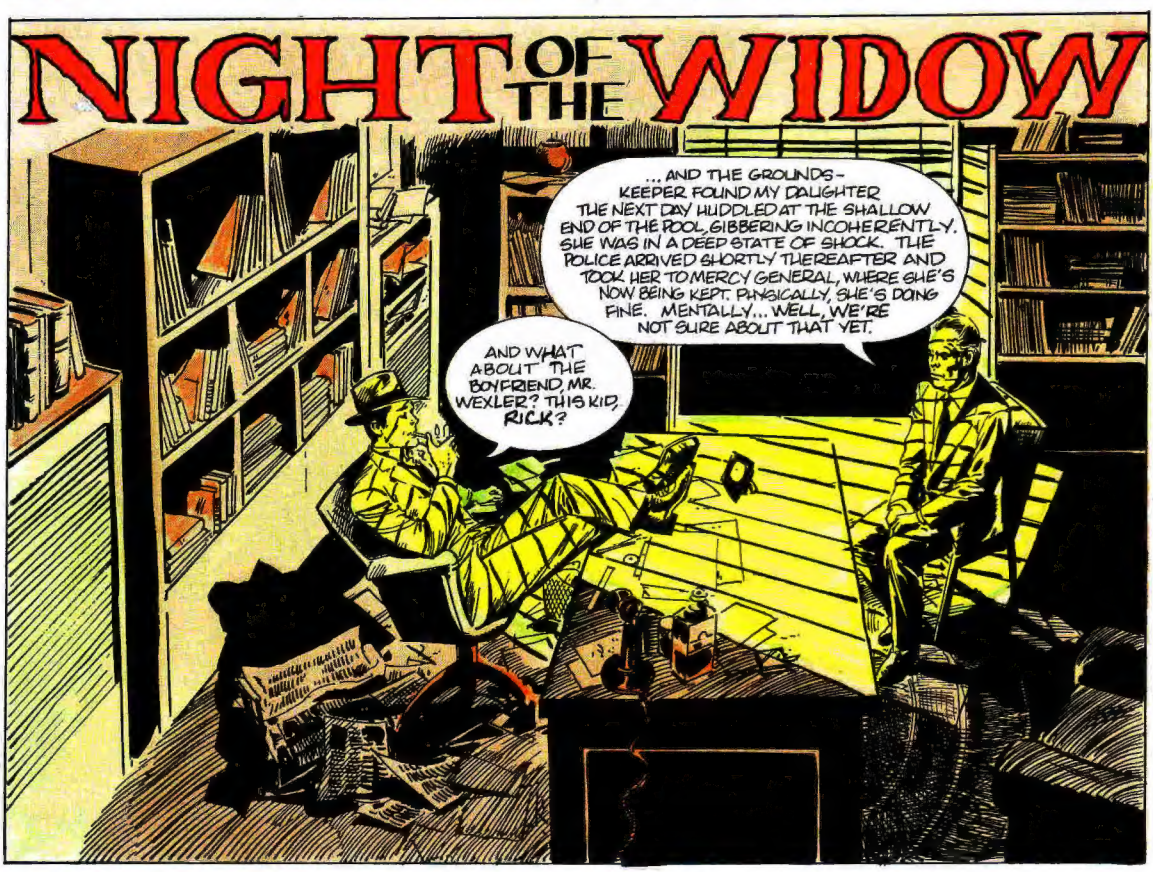
Story: Bruce Jones Art: Gerald Forton Letters: Diane Valentino Colors: Ripley Thornhill

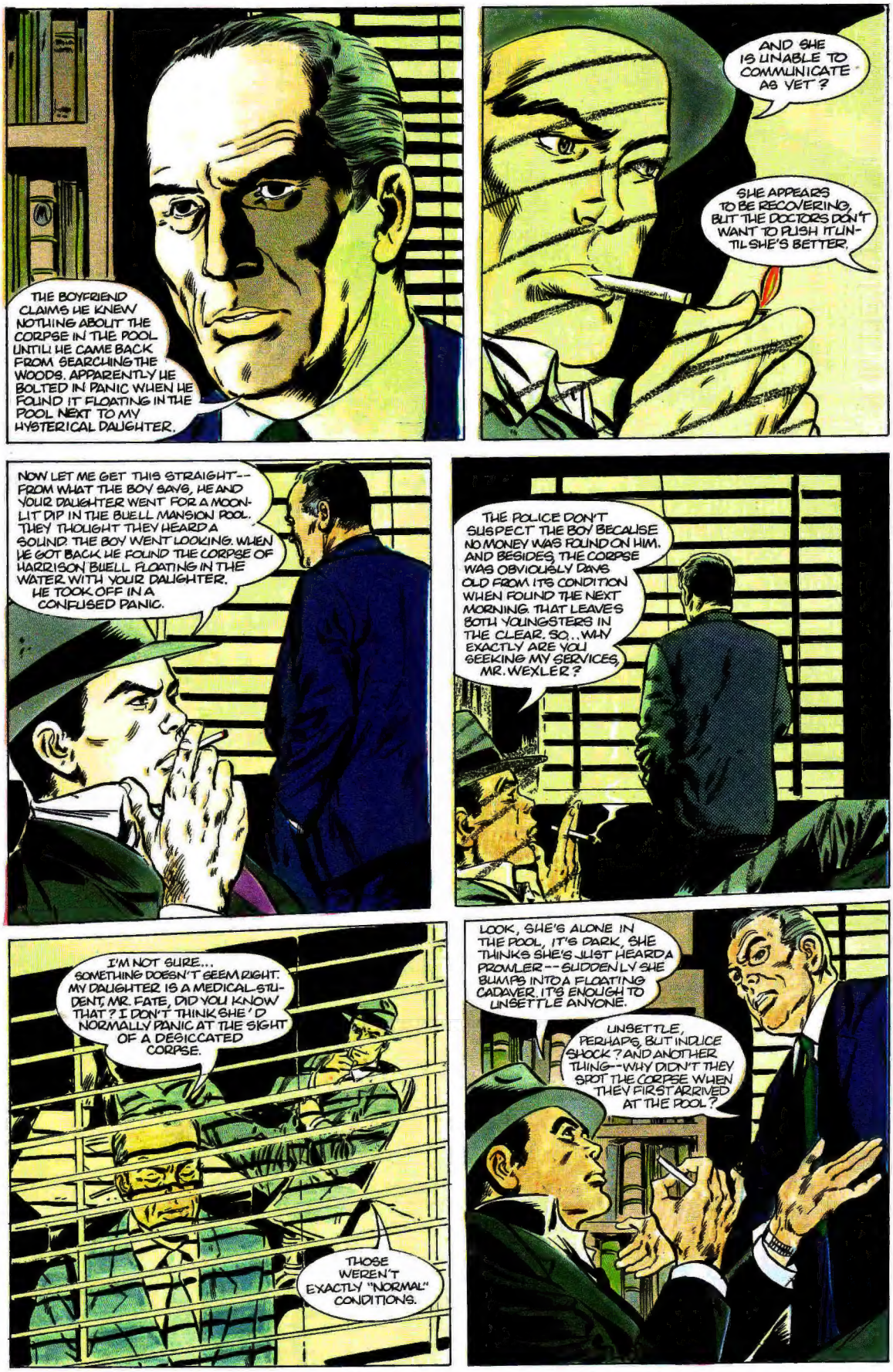

COME ON IN! THE WATER, AS THEY SAY, IS FINE!
Shhh! QUIT SHOUTING!
IT'S F-FREEZING!
YOU EXPECTED THEM TO LEAVE THE HEATER ON FOR US?
EEEEEEEEE
BEST WAY IS TO JUST GET IT OVER WITH!
THAT WASN'T FUNNY, RICK! I COULD HAVE--
--RICK? RICK, WHERE ARE YOU?
RICK, PLEASE DON'T PLAY GAMES! I'M SCAR--
EEEEEEEEE
:gasp: SMART GUY! I OUGHT TO LEAVE JUST FOR THAT!
BUT YOU'RE WARM NOW, AREN'T YOU?


CRUNCH!
W-WHAT WAS THAT?
I-I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING...
CRUNCH!
THERE IT IS AGAIN! SOMEBODY'S COMING!
LIGHTEN UP! IT'S PROBABLY JUST A SQUIRREL. I'LL CHECK.
NO, DON'T LEAVE ME.
STAY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE POOL, CONNIE.
RICK, I--
AND KEEP QUIET!
RICK?
D-DID YOU SEE ANYTHING?
}mmph{
RICK, I WANT TO GO HOME NOW!
}wwhu{
HONEY? I CAN'T SEE--CHLORINE IN MY EYES, RICK, HELP ME!

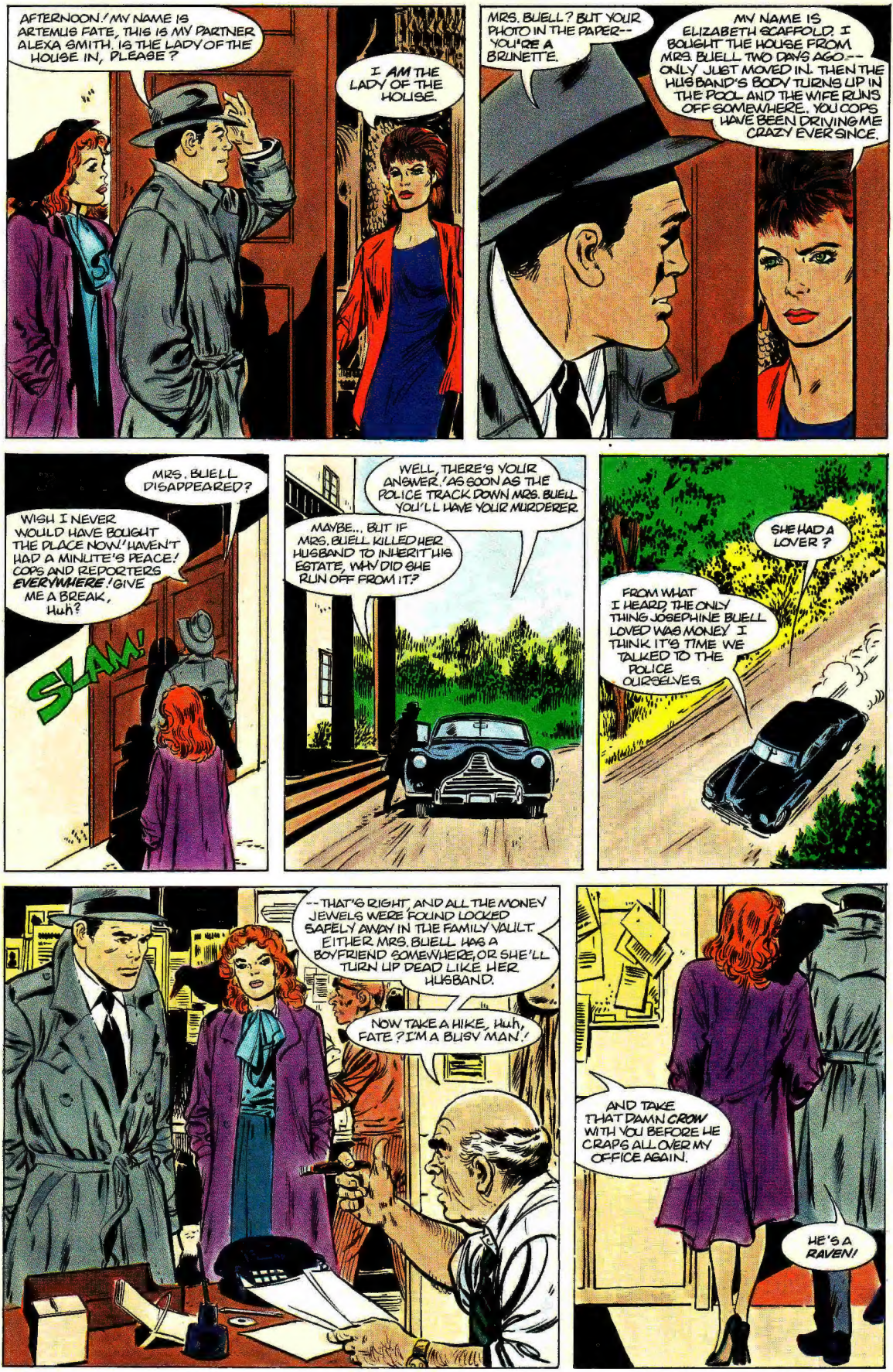


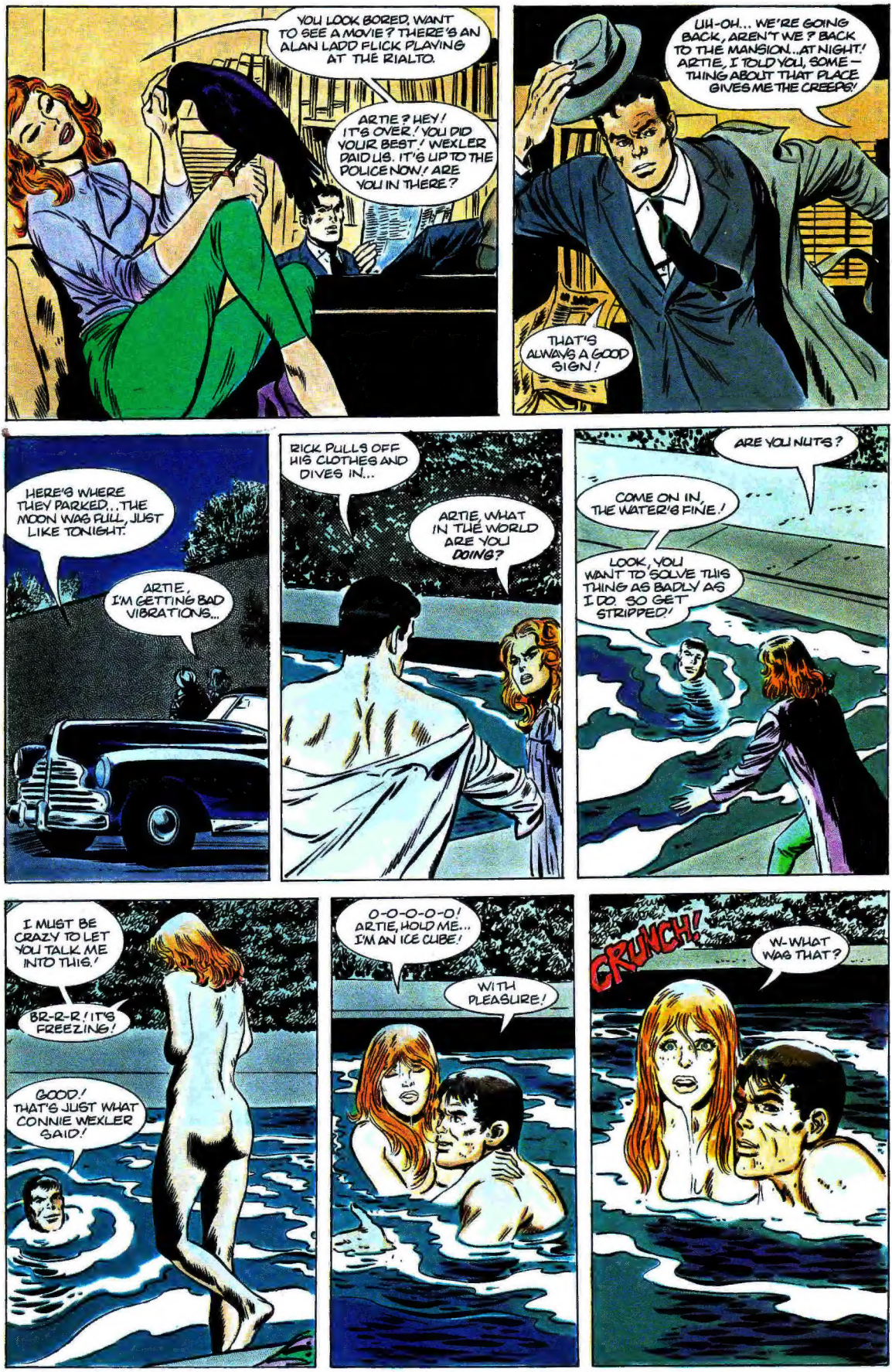
NIGHT OF THE WIDOW


...AND THE GROUNDS-KEEPER FOUND MY DAUGHTER THE NEXT DAY HUDDLED AT THE SHALLOW END OF THE POOL, GIBBERING INCOHERENTLY. SHE WAS IN A DEEP STATE OF SHOCK. THE POLICE ARRIVED SHORTLY THEREAFTER AND TOOK HER TO MERCY GENERAL, WHERE SHE'S NOW BEING KEPT. PHYSICALLY, SHE'S DOING FINE. MENTALLY... WELL, WE'RE NOT SURE ABOUT THAT YET.
AND WHAT ABOUT THE BOYFRIEND, MR. WEXLER? THIS KID, RICK?


THE BOYFRIEND CLAIMS HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE CORPSE IN THE POOL UNTIL HE CAME BACK FROM SEARCHING THE WOODS. APPARENTLY HE BOLTED IN PANIC WHEN HE FOUND IT FLOATING IN THE POOL NEXT TO MY HYSTERICAL DAUGHTER.
AND SHE IS UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE AS YET?
SHE APPEARS TO BE RECOVERING, BUT THE DOCTORS DON'T WANT TO PUSH IT UNTIL SHE'S BETTER.
NOW LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT-- FROM WHAT THE BOY SAYS, HE AND YOUR DAUGHTER WENT FOR A MOONLIT DIP IN THE BUELL MANSION POOL. THEY THOUGHT THEY HEARD A SOUND. THE BOY WENT LOOKING. WHEN HE GOT BACK, HE FOUND THE CORPSE OF HARRISON BUELL FLOATING IN THE WATER WITH YOUR DAUGHTER. HE TOOK OFF IN A CONFUSED PANIC.
THE POLICE DON'T SUSPECT THE BOY BECAUSE NO MONEY WAS FOUND ON HIM. AND BESIDES, THE CORPSE WAS OBVIOUSLY DAYS OLD FROM ITS CONDITION WHEN FOUND THE NEXT MORNING. THAT LEAVES BOTH YOUNGSTERS IN THE CLEAR. SO... WHY EXACTLY ARE YOU SEEKING MY SERVICES, MR. WEXLER?
I'M NOT SURE... SOMETHING DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT. MY DAUGHTER IS A MEDICAL-STUDENT, MR. FATE, DID YOU KNOW THAT? I DON'T THINK SHE'D NORMALLY PANIC AT THE SIGHT OF A DESICCATED CORPSE.
THOSE WEREN'T EXACTLY "NORMAL" CONDITIONS.
LOOK, SHE'S ALONE IN THE POOL, IT'S DARK, SHE THINKS SHE'S JUST HEARD A PROWLER-- SUDDENLY SHE BUMPS INTO A FLOATING CADAVER. IT'S ENOUGH TO UNSETTLE ANYONE.
UNSETTLE, PERHAPS, BUT INDUCE SHOCK? AND ANOTHER THING--WHY DIDN'T THEY SPOT THE CORPSE WHEN THEY FIRST ARRIVED AT THE POOL?

IT WAS DARK.
THERE WAS A FULL MOON. THE BOY CLAIMS HE SAW NOTHING BUT EMPTY WATER WHEN THEY ARRIVED.
ARE YOU SAYING SOMEBODY DUMPED THE CORPSE INTO THE POOL AFTER YOUR DAUGHTER ARRIVED?
I'M SAYING I DON'T BELIEVE IT WAS THERE BEFORE THEY ARRIVED THAT'S ALL I'M SAYING.
WELL, MR. WEXLER, I MEAN, THE CORPSE DIDN'T JUST WALK INTO THE POOL BY ITSELF!
...RIGHT?
--AND THE GIRL'S OLD MAN IS PAYING US $500.00 JUST TO SNOOP AROUND?
MILLIONAIRE BUELL FOUND DEAD IN POOL
POLICE SUSPECT FOUL PLAY
HE DOESN'T LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS DAUGHTER.
SO WHERE DO WE START SNOOPING?
THE BUELL MANSION, I GUESS. WE'LL ASK MRS. BUELL WHAT SHE THINKS HAPPENED TO HER HUSBAND CASE THE JOINT. STUFF LIKE THAT.
HAVEN'T THE POLICE ALREADY DONE THAT, ARTIE?
YEAH, BUT WE GOTTA START SOMEWHERE...
WHAT ABOUT THE CORPSE? DO THEY KNOW WHAT KILLED HIM?
YEAH... 90 PER-CENT OF THE BLOOD WAS DRAINED FROM HIS BODY
YUCK!


AFTERNOON! MY NAME IS ARTEMUS FATE, THIS IS MY PARTNER ALEXA SMITH. IS THE LADY OF THE HOUSE IN, PLEASE?
I AM THE LADY OF THE HOUSE.
MRS. BUELL? BUT YOUR PHOTO IN THE PAPER-- YOU'RE A BRUNETTE.
MY NAME IS ELIZABETH SCAFFOLD. I BOUGHT THE HOUSE FROM MRS. BUELL TWO DAYS AGO-- ONLY JUST MOVED IN. THEN THE HUSBAND'S BODY TURNS UP IN THE POOL AND THE WIFE RUNS OFF SOMEWHERE. YOU COPS HAVE BEEN DRIVING ME CRAZY EVER SINCE.
MRS. BUELL DISAPPEARED?
WISH I NEVER WOULD HAVE BOUGHT THE PLACE NOW! HAVEN'T HAD A MINUTE'S PEACE! COPS AND REPORTERS EVERYWHERE! GIVE ME A BREAK, Huh?
SLAM!
WELL, THERE'S YOUR ANSWER. AS SOON AS THE POLICE TRACK DOWN MRS. BUELL YOU'LL HAVE YOUR MURDERER
MAYBE... BUT IF MRS. BUELL KILLED HER HUSBAND TO INHERIT HIS ESTATE, WHY DID SHE RUN OFF FROM IT?
SHE HAD A LOVER?
FROM WHAT I HEARD, THE ONLY THING JOSEPHINE BUELL LOVED WAS MONEY. I THINK IT'S TIME WE TALKED TO THE POLICE OURSELVES.
--THAT'S RIGHT, AND ALL THE MONEY JEWELS WERE FOUND LOCKED SAFELY AWAY IN THE FAMILY VAULT. EITHER MRS. BUELL HAS A BOYFRIEND SOMEWHERE, OR SHE'LL TURN UP DEAD LIKE HER HUSBAND.
NOW TAKE A HIKE, Huh, FATE? I'M A BUSY MAN!
AND TAKE THAT DAMN CROW WITH YOU BEFORE HE CRAPS ALL OVER MY OFFICE AGAIN.
HE'S A RAVEN!


YOU LOOK BORED, WANT TO SEE A MOVIE? THERE'S AN ALAN LADD FLICK PLAYING AT THE RIALTO.
ARTIE? HEY! IT'S OVER! YOU DID YOUR BEST! WEXLER PAID US. IT'S UP TO THE POLICE NOW! ARE YOU IN THERE?
UH-OH... WE'RE GOING BACK, AREN'T WE? BACK TO THE MANSION...AT NIGHT! ARTIE, I TOLD YOU, SOME-THING ABOUT THAT PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS!
THAT'S ALWAYS A GOOD SIGN!
HERE'S WHERE THEY PARKED...THE MOON WAS FULL, JUST LIKE TONIGHT.
ARTIE, I'M GETTING BAD VIBRATIONS...
RICK PULLS OFF HIS CLOTHES AND DIVES IN...
ARTIE, WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU DOING?
ARE YOU NUTS?
COME ON IN, THE WATER'S FINE!
LOOK, YOU WANT TO SOLVE THIS THING AS BADLY AS I DO. SO GET STRIPPED!
I MUST BE CRAZY TO LET YOU TALK ME INTO THIS!
BR-R-R! IT'S FREEZING!
GOOD! THAT'S JUST WHAT CONNIE WEXLER SAID!
O-O-O-O-O-O! ARTIE, HOLD ME... I'M AN ICE CUBE!
WITH PLEASURE!
CRUNCH!
W-WHAT WAS THAT?

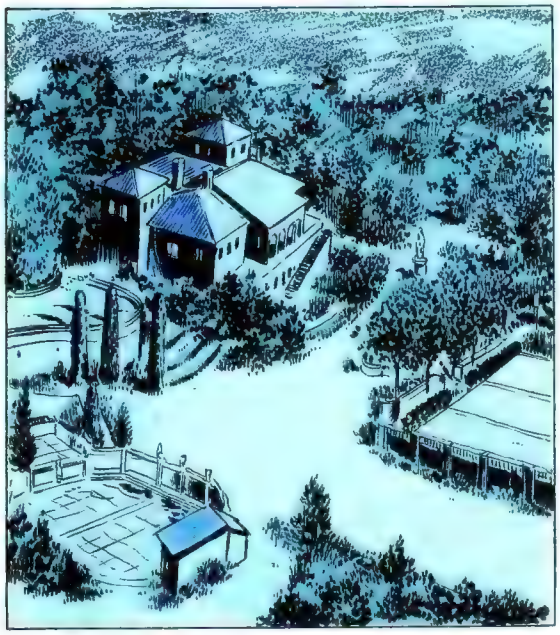
PROBABLY JUST A SQUIRREL... I'LL CHECK!
HEY! THAT'S WHAT RICK SAID!
I KNOW.
WELL IF YOU THINK I'M STAYING IN HERE ALONE, YOU'RE NUTS!
OKAY, COME ALONG, BUT Shhh!
WELL, WHADDYA KNOW, IT WAS A SQUIRREL!
T-THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE... SOMETHING HERE WITH US... CAN'T YOU FEEL IT?
YOU'RE THE PSYCHIC, NOT ME. OPEN UP, ALEX, DON'T BE AFRAID... I'M HERE.
...IMAGES... TERRIBLE... IMAGES ... SOMETHING COMING ...APART...
...OH, GOD!... IT'S MRS. BUELL! ... S-SHE'S BEING... S-SHE'S B-BEING...SKINNED ALIVE!!
FLUMP!
YAGHHHHHHHHH!!
EEEEEEEEE
IT'S HER! MRS. BUELL!

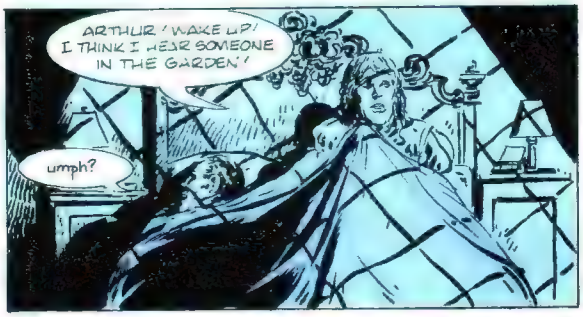
WHO COULD HAVE DONE SUCH A THING, ARTIE? SKINNING A PERSON ALIVE LIKE THAT? DRAINING THE BLOOD FROM HER HUSBAND! AND WHY? NO MONEY WAS TAKEN. THERE'S NO MOTIVE!
THERE'S ALWAYS A MOTIVE.

AND POOR MRS. SCAFFOLD! SHE JUST MOVED IN!
SHE JUST MOVED OUT! THIS MORNING. COULDN'T STAND THE PLACE AFTER ALL THAT'S HAPPENED
I DON'T BLAME HER!

I-I'VE LET YOU DOWN, HAVEN'T I, ARTIE? IT'S BEEN DAYS AND WE STILL DON'T HAVE A CLUE...
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, LOVE SOME CASES ARE JUST NOT SOLVABLE.

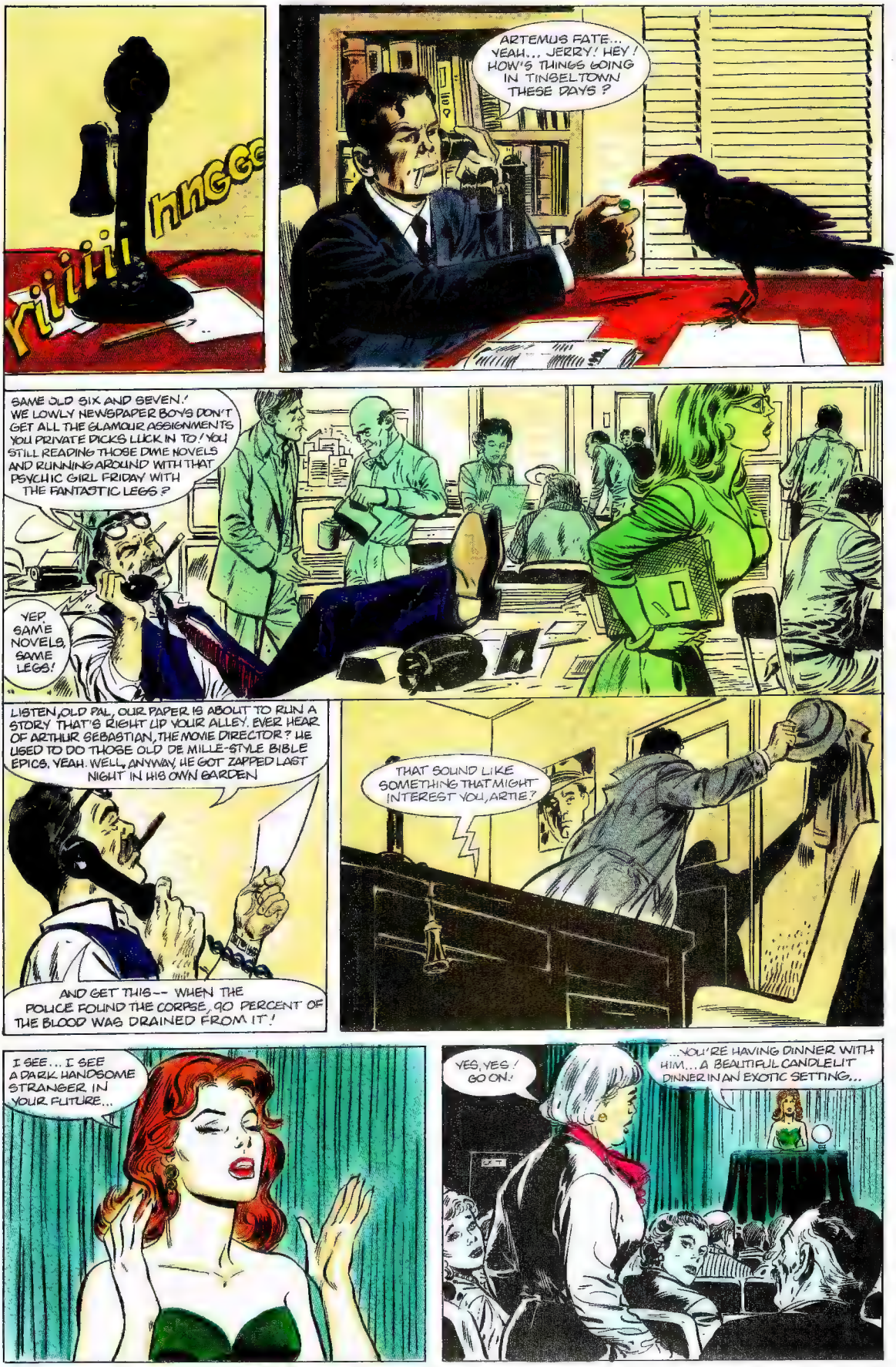
C'MON, I'LL BUY YOU A FAT STEAK AND TAKE YOU TO THAT ALAN LADD PICTURE!




ARTHUR! WAKE UP! I THINK I HEAR SOMEONE IN THE GARDEN!
umph?

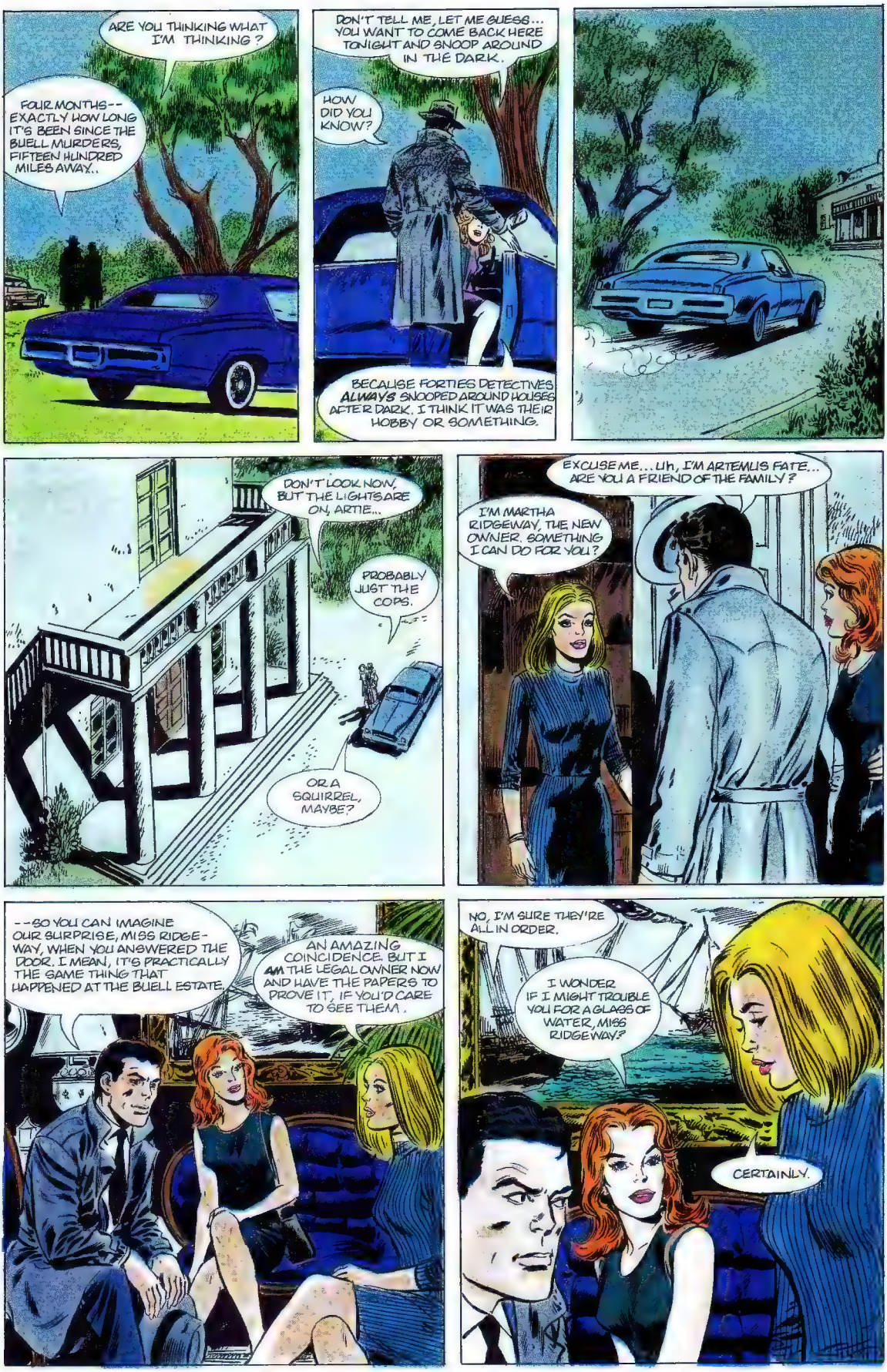
ARE YOU SURE?
I SAW A FIGURE! ARTHUR, BE CAREFUL!

W-WHO'S THERE?...
...W-WHO IS IT?
CRUNCH!
WH-WHAT IN THE WORLD...?
YAGHH!
EEEEEAAAAGGGGGGG
=plick=


riiiii
ARTEMUS FATE... YEAH... JERRY! HEY! HOW'S THINGS GOING IN TINSELTOWN THESE DAYS?
SAME OLD SIX AND SEVEN! WE LOWLY NEWSPAPER BOYS DON'T GET ALL THE GLAMOUR ASSIGNMENTS YOU PRIVATE DICKS LUCK IN TO! YOU STILL READING THOSE DIME NOVELS AND RUNNING AROUND WITH THAT PSYCHIC GIRL FRIDAY WITH THE FANTASTIC LEGS?
YEP. SAME NOVELS, SAME LEGS!
LISTEN, OLD PAL, OUR PAPER IS ABOUT TO RUN A STORY THAT'S RIGHT UP YOUR ALLEY. EVER HEAR OF ARTHUR SEBASTIAN, THE MOVIE DIRECTOR? HE USED TO DO THOSE OLD DE MILLE-STYLE BIBLE EPICS, YEAH. WELL, ANYWAY, HE GOT ZAPPED LAST NIGHT IN HIS OWN GARDEN
AND GET THIS-- WHEN THE POLICE FOUND THE CORPSE, 90 PERCENT OF THE BLOOD WAS DRAINED FROM IT!
THAT SOUND LIKE SOMETHING THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU, ARTIE?
I SEE... I SEE A DARK HANDSOME STRANGER IN YOUR FUTURE...
YES, YES! GO ON!
...YOU'RE HAVING DINNER WITH HIM... A BEAUTIFUL CANDLELIT DINNER IN AN EXOTIC SETTING...

...HE'S GOING TO ASK YOU A QUESTION...A QUESTION YOU WANT VERY MUCH TO HEAR ...A QUESTION THAT'S GOING TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE!
YES, YES! WHAT IS IT?
EXIT
CAW!
OH CHRIST, NOT NOW! NOT THE CROW AGAIN!
HELLO, SATAN!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! THAT CONCLUDES THIS EVENING'S PERFORMANCE!
WAIT A SECOND! YA GOTTA TELL ME! WHAT DOES HE ASK? WHAT DOES THE DARK STRANGER ASK?
I MEAN IT, ALEXA! WALK THIS TIME AND YOU'RE THROUGH, FINISHED! WASHED UP!!
NO SMOKING
BRING OUT THE GUY WITH THE WALTZING PARROT, SID! TOODLE-LOO!
WHERE IS SHE? WHERE'S THE PSYCHIC LADY? WHERE'D SHE GO?
HEY, YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED BACKSTAGE, LADY!
EXIT
I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS, ALEXA!
OH, MY GOD.. TALL...DARK... IT'S YOU! YOU'RE THE STRANGER I'M TO MEET, AREN'T YOU? YOU'RE GOING TO ASK ME THE QUESTION, TAKE ME TO A CANDLE-LIGHT DINNER! WHERE'RE WE GOING? MARTY'S SEAFOOD, CHIN YOUNG'S, BURGER KING? I DON'T CARE, ANYWHERE, JUST ASK ME!

BUT ARTIE, IT'S BEEN FOUR MONTHS SINCE THE BUELL MURDERS! MAYBE THIS ONE IN L.A.'S NOT EVEN CONNECTED.
C'MON, ALEX, HOW MANY HOMICIDAL MANIACS DO YOU KNOW THAT DRAIN MOST OF THE BLOOD FROM THEIR VICTIMS?
WELL, I GUESS IF THE POLICE FIND MRS. SEBASTIAN'S SKIN LYING AROUND THE MANSION GROUNDS, WE'RE ON TO SOMETHING!
FOUND IT THIS MORNING UNDER A BUSH... PRETTY, Huh?
WELL, FATE? LOOK FAMILIAR?
IT'S THE WORK OF THE SAME KILLER, ALL RIGHT... Ugh! GHASTLY.
I DON'T ORDINARILY LIKE P.I.s SNOOPING AROUND, FATE, BUT YOU WERE IN ON THIS WACKO'S WORK FROM THE BEGINNING, SO I'D APPRECIATE YOUR HELP.
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN, DETECTIVE SMITH, BUT FRANKLY, I'M AS STYMIED AS YOU ARE.
WHAT ABOUT A MOTIVE THIS TIME? DID SEBASTIAN HAVE ENEMIES?
NONE. EVERYBODY OUT HERE LOVED ARTHUR SEBASTIAN AND THERE WAS NO MONEY TAKEN, JUST LIKE THE SITUATION IN YOUR HOMETOWN.
POOR SEBASTIAN... JUST GOTTEN HIMSELF A NEW WIFE, TOO. ONLY BEEN MARRIED ABOUT FOUR MONTHS.
FOUR MONTHS...


ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING?
FOUR MONTHS--EXACTLY HOW LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE THE BUELL MURDERS, FIFTEEN HUNDRED MILES AWAY..
DON'T TELL ME, LET ME GUESS... YOU WANT TO COME BACK HERE TONIGHT AND SNOOP AROUND IN THE DARK.
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
BECAUSE FORTIES DETECTIVES ALWAYS SNOOPED AROUND HOUSES AFTER DARK. I THINK IT WAS THEIR HOBBY OR SOMETHING.
DON'T LOOK NOW, BUT THE LIGHTS ARE ON, ARTIE...
PROBABLY JUST THE COPS.
OR A SQUIRREL, MAYBE?
EXCUSE ME... UH, I'M ARTEMUS FATE... ARE YOU A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY?
I'M MARTHA RIDGEWAY, THE NEW OWNER. SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR YOU?
--SO YOU CAN IMAGINE OUR SURPRISE, MISS RIDGEWAY, WHEN YOU ANSWERED THE DOOR. I MEAN, IT'S PRACTICALLY THE SAME THING THAT HAPPENED AT THE BUELL ESTATE.
AN AMAZING COINCIDENCE. BUT I AM THE LEGAL OWNER NOW AND HAVE THE PAPERS TO PROVE IT, IF YOU'D CARE TO SEE THEM.
NO, I'M SURE THEY'RE ALL IN ORDER.
I WONDER IF I MIGHT TROUBLE YOU FOR A GLASS OF WATER, MISS RIDGEWAY?
CERTAINLY.

WELL? PLASTIC SURGERY?
I DOUBT IT-- YOU CAN ALTER FEATURES WITH SURGERY, BUT NOT COLOR AND HEIGHT. I DON'T THINK THIS IS SCAFFORD MASQUERADING AS RIDGEWAY.
HERE YOU ARE, MISS SMITH.
THANK YOU. OH-- HOW CLUMSY OF ME!
CRASH!
DON'T BOTHER, THE SERVANTS WILL GET IT LATER.
OH, NO, I INSIST!
DID YOU POCKET A FEW PIECES?
CHECK. LET'S JUST HOPE THEY'RE THE RIGHT PIECES...
HERE'S AN UNSMUDGED ONE... NO, THAT ONE BELONGS TO ALEXA SMITH. LET'S SEE... HERE'S ONE... BINGO! THE FINGERPRINT OF MISS MARTHA RIDGEWAY.
UNLESS IT BELONGS TO ONE OF THE SERVANTS.
FREDDY? ARTEMUS FATE, IN L.A.... LISTEN, DO ME A FAVOR AND RUN A TRACER ON A SET OF PRINTS FOR ME, WILL YOU? YEAH, I'LL EXPRESS MAIL THEM TO YOU TONIGHT!
NOW WHAT?
NOW WE SIT TIGHT UNTIL FREDDY CALLS BACK. I WONDER IF THEY HAVE ANY GOOD REVIVAL HOUSE THEATERS IN THE AREA-- MAYBE WE COULD CATCH A BOB MITCHUM MOVIE.

ARTIE? FREDDY COMPTON, IN CHICAGO. I'VE GOT YOUR PRINTS--THEY BELONG TO A MISS ELIZABETH SCAFFORD OF NEWARK, NEW JERSEY.

HE'S GOT 'EM! IT'S SCAFFORD, ALL RIGHT!
HOLD ON, ARTIE, THERE'S MORE...

THEY ALSO BELONG TO RUTH CHARLES OF DES MOINES, IOWA, AND A CHARLOTTE BARKER OF SUNNYDALE, FLORIDA. THIS KID GETS AROUND!
GOOD GRIEF! LISTEN, FREDDY, TO WHOM DO THE EARLIEST SET OF PRINTS BELONG ACCORDING TO YOUR FILES?

THAT WOULD BE BARKER OF SUNNYDALE, FLORIDA. THE PRINTS WE HAVE HERE WERE TAKEN FROM HER UNIVERSITY I.D. CARD AT MIAMI STATE. SHE WAS MAJORING IN BIOLOGY THERE ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO.
MY BROTHER WENT TO M.S. YOU MIGHT TRY A PROFESSOR EMIL PHELPS THERE. I THINK HE TAUGHT BIOLOGY AT THAT TIME.

--OF COURSE I KNEW CHARLOTTE BARKER, SHE WAS A BRILLIANT STUDENT. SHE KNEW MORE ABOUT ARACHNOLOGY THAN MOST OF MY COLLEAGUES HERE.
WHAT'S "ARACHNOLOGY"?

THE STUDY OF SPIDERS.
CHARLOTTE WAS **OBSESSED** WITH THEM. LITERALLY FASCINATED WITH THEIR REGENERATIVE PROPERTIES, YOU KNOW: CUT OFF A LEG, A NEW ONE GROWS, THAT SORT OF THING. SHE MUST HAVE CONDUCTED A MILLION EXPERIMENTS ON THE SUBJECT. BASED HER THESIS ON IT. PITY ABOUT CHARLOTTE...

PITY?
THAT SHE DIED AT LEAST I PRESUME SHE'S DEAD BY NOW. RIDDLED BY CANCER ALL THE TIME SHE STUDIED HERE. DIDN'T YOU KNOW?

YOU'LL FORGIVE ME IF I'M A LITTLE CONFUSED.
JOIN THE CLUB. MEANWHILE, LET'S FIND A PHONE BOOK AND SEE IF ANY OF CHARLOTTE'S FAMILY STILL RESIDE IN FLORIDA.
YES...?
MR. BARKER? I'M ARTEMUS FATE. I, UH, ATTENDED SCHOOL WITH YOUR DAUGHTER CHARLOTTE SOME YEARS AGO. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TRACK HER DOWN...
EVERYONE'S BEEN TRYING TO TRACK HER DOWN, MR. FATE, INCLUDING HER OWN FAMILY. WE HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN NEARLY TEN YEARS, NOT SINCE SHE UP AND LEFT THE UNIVERSITY. I'M AFRAID SHE MIGHT HAVE DIED SOME WHERE. SHE HAD CANCER, YOU KNOW.
YES, I KNOW.
I WAS WONDERING, SIR, WOULD YOU HAVE A PHOTO OF CHARLOTTE AROUND THE HOUSE? JUST FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE...
WELL, THERE'S HER COLLEGE YEAR-BOOK, UPSTAIRS IN HER OLD ROOM. YOU'LL HAVE TO FETCH IT YOURSELF, I DON'T CLIMB STAIRS ANYMORE.
HOLY MOLEY!
--TEXTBOOKS ON THE LIFE CYCLE OF LATRODECTUS MACTANS... THE COMMON BLACK WIDOW...
ARTIE, THIS LOOKS LIKE A DIARY!
"JUNE 2nd: QUITTING THE UNI-VERSITY, WAY BEYOND THEM NOW, EVEN PROFESSOR PHELPS. SO CLOSE I CAN FEEL IT! MUST FIND THE ANSWER! WIDOW SERUM TOO DANGEROUS, BUT AM DILUTING IT WITH MYGALOMORPH MIXTURE"
...WHAT'S A 'MYGALOMORPH,' DO YOU SUPPOSE?
HERE IT IS--
"MYGALO-MORPHS... THERA-PHOSIDA... PART OF THE FAMILY KNOWN COMMONLY AS TARANTULAS."

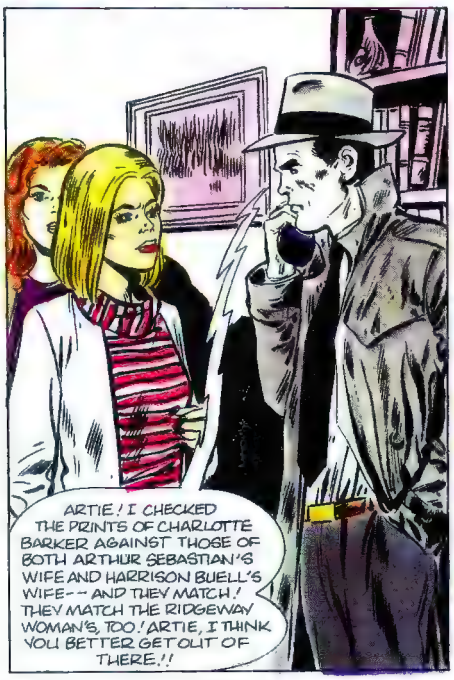
"JULY 10th: TOO SICK TO WORK ALL WEEK ...SO CLOSE! WILL TRY ONE MORE EXPERIMENT TONIGHT. MUST COMPLETE WORK BEFORE DISEASE KILLS ME! MUST FIND BREAK-THROUGH. NEED MORE TIME!"
THAT'S THE FINAL ENTRY.
ARTIE, WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS SHE WORKING ON?
CHARLOTTE BARKER, GENIUS STUDENT, IS DYING FROM CANCER...YET DESPERATE TO UNCOVER SOME ESOTERIC SECRET ABOUT THE SPIDER KINGDOM, SHE DISAPPEARS.
TEN YEARS LATER A WOMAN NAMED ELIZA BETH SCAFFORD, BEARING HER FINGERPRINTS, BUYS THE BUELL MANSION IN CHICAGO, ONLY TO HAVE THE PREVIOUS OWNERS TURN UP DEAD IN THEIR OWN BACKYARD.
FOUR MONTHS LATER A DUPLICATE CRIME IS DISCOVERED IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, AT THE HOME OF ANOTHER WEALTHY RETIREE. ON TOP OF THIS, A WOMAN NAMED MARTHA RIDGEWAY HAS RECENTLY PURCHASED THE SEBASTIAN MANSION. SHE POSSESSES FINGERPRINTS IDENTICAL TO THE OTHERS. YET SHE IS PHYSICALLY INCAPABLE OF BEING THE OTHER TWO WOMEN, EVEN WITH SURGERY...
ARTIE, IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.
YES! YES IT DOES! THERE'S A PATTERN HERE, IF ONLY WE CAN FIND IT! LET'S SEE IF WE CAN USE MR. BARKER'S PHONE!
FREDDY, IT'S ME. ONE MORE FAVOR. I NEED YOU TO CHECK ANOTHER SERIES OF PRINTS FOR ME...
BACK TO L.A.?
FREDDY MIGHT HAVE SOME WORD FOR ME BY THE TIME WE GET THERE... AND I WANT TO HAVE ANOTHER LITTLE TALK WITH THE MYSTE-RIOUS MISS RIDGEWAY.

ARTIE, LOOK, A TRAILER HITCH! SHE'S MOVING!
BEGINNING TO SEE A PATTERN YET?

IN A HURRY, MISS RIDGEWAY?
MR. FATE, MISS SMITH.

INTERESTING LIBRARY YOU HAVE HERE, MISS RIDGEWAY. ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY DEVOTED TO CHELICERATA. FUNNY... MOST PEOPLE ARE AFRAID OF SPIDERS...
YES, I-I'VE DECIDED TO SELL. AS SOON AS I CAN FIND A BUYER, THAT IS, TOO MUCH PUBLICITY AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO--AFTER THE RECENT TRAGEDIES...
RRINGG

THAT'LL BE FOR ME... I ASKED A FRIEND TO CALL ME HERE.
RRINGG


ARTIE! I CHECKED THE PRINTS OF CHARLOTTE BARKER AGAINST THOSE OF BOTH ARTHUR SEBASTIAN'S WIFE AND HARRISON BUELL'S WIFE--AND THEY MATCH! THEY MATCH THE RIDGEWAY WOMAN'S, TOO! ARTIE, I THINK YOU BETTER GET OUT OF THERE!!

YOU'RE A VERY RESOURCEFUL MAN, MR. FATE.
AND YOU'RE A VERY BRILLIANT SCIENTIST, MISS BARKER. BUT AN EXTREMELY SELFISH ONE. IF YOU REALLY HAVE DISCOVERED A CURE FOR CANCER, WHY NOT SHARE IT WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD?

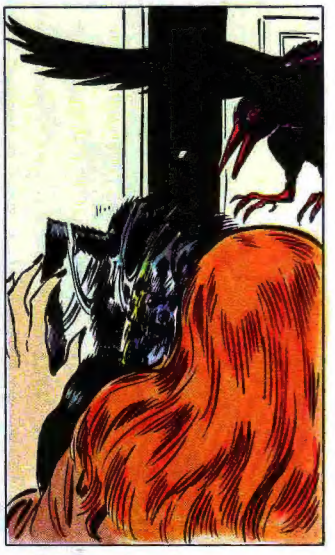
THE SIDE EFFECTS, MR. FATE--BUT THEN YOU'D ALREADY GUESSED THAT, HADN'T YOU?
GUESSED, BUT NOT FULLY COMPREHENDED. I UNDERSTAND WHY THE SPIDER SERUM TRANSFORMS YOU IN PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, BUT NOT WHY YOU FOUND IT NECESSARY TO MURDER EACH OF YOUR HUSBANDS.

AS I SAID, MR. FATE, ONE OF THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE SERUM -- THE BLACK WIDOW ALWAYS CONSUMES HER MATE ONCE THE WEDDING HAS BEEN CONSUMMATED.
I REALLY HAD NO CONTROL OVER IT...
I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND, ARTIE! SHE'S JUST A WOMAN OF AVERAGE STRENGTH. HOW COULD SHE OVERPOWER ALL THOSE MEN?
SIDE EFFECTS AGAIN, MISS SMITH... THIS TIME FROM THE TARANTULA SIDE OF THE SERUM. THE MYGALOMORPHS MOLT, YOU SEE, EVERY FOUR MONTHS.
IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN I REALIZED I COULD INITIATE THE PROCESS AT WILL!
ALEX, RUN!
BLAM BLAM
THE GUN WILL DO YOU NO GOOD, MR. FATE... MY REGENERATIVE POWERS ARE AT THEIR HEIGHT DURING MOLTING!
EEEEEEEEEEEE
RIIIPP!

ALEX, THROUGH THE DOOR, QUICK!
Aahh! ARTIE!
SSSS
CRASH!
CRAAASH!

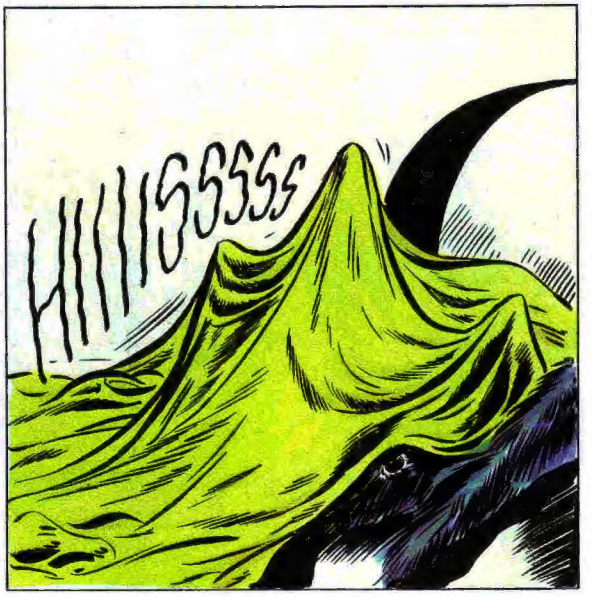
TINKLE
TINKLE
TINKLE
CRAAASH!

CAWWW!
HISSSS!



L-LISTEN...C-CAN'T WE SIT DOWN SOMEWHERE OVER A NICE FLY AND TALK ABOUT THIS?

FLUFF!
WHUUUMP


HIIISSSSS

ARTIE! WAKE UP! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
RAUUGH!
ARTIE, FOR GOD'S SAKE!
ARTIE...
GRAASH
RAUUGHHH
W-WHAT HAPPENED? ARE WE WATCHING THE LATE SHOW?..
LATER THAN YOU THINK! COME ON!

RAUGGGHHH
WAIT! WAIT...SHE'S DYING...
AAUUUHHHHH!!
SHOOOOOOSSHHH
ARTIE, LOOK!
YES..
...YET ANOTHER INCARNATION... MORE BEAUTIFUL AND MORE DEADLY THAN THE ONE BEFORE...
POOR LITTLE CHARLOTTE BARKER...
AS THE MAN SAID, "OH, WHAT A TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE"...
the end